

INSIDE THE

AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME used to be his castle... but today he stands a good chance of having it taken over by Britain's growing army of squatters.

It used to be the long-vacant premises of property speculators that were the targets of the live-for-nothing invaders.

Now it's ANYONE'S home... even a family coming back from holiday can find itself locked out, with strangers in occupation.

Squatting, 1975, is highly organised, nationwide, spreading rapidly — and DANGEROUS.

The Sunday People's investigation has shown that it is not only a social problem, but a sinister political threat.

Among the thousands of squatters, living rent-free, rate-free and apparently conscience-free in slums and grand houses all over Britain, one group stands out like a red hot iron on a dirty grey paper:

THE REVOLUTIONARIES.

Squatting started as a desperate resort by the growing homeless. But the rich and freeholders are being calmly exploited by aggressive political activists.

And squatter leaders' aims have nothing to do with social welfare.



CORBYN... 'a Marxist'



CRICHTON... Social Security

Their leaders.. they want to change your world

By a SUNDAY PEOPLE investigating team including PETER THOMAS and DAN WOODING.



DMOWSKI... persuasive

for their drains, their street lights, their garbage collection and other municipal services.

Undismayed at being called a parasite, one of the squatter leaders insisted at us: "There's only one kind of parasite: the fool who pays rent and that the fool who pays a mortgage."

And another: "Our aim is to destroy the system. All property should belong to the people."

BUT who are "the people"? By the revolutionaries' standards it would seem to exclude anyone who wears a suit, has a hair-cut, washes regularly or does a job.

Some squatter groups today are so highly organised that they even have their own "estate agency", radio stations, police, newspapers and "health centres".

ESTATE AGENCY keeps registers of empty premises and

offers them to prospective squatters. Lists of "desirable residences" are compiled — with helpful details like "electricity available" and "no working."

A RADIO STATION puts out squatter news and views and "ads" describing desirable squatable premises. Unlicensed, of course, the station is itself a squatter in the liberally used frequency bands. And it transmits from squatted property.

NEWSPAPERS and magazines contain advice on how to connect up gas and electricity supplies, how the law works, news about the latest evictions.

A POLICE "sound deals with offenders against the squatters' own code—such as people who move in on other squatters' territory. It also deals with such matters as theft, to save

the embarrassment of calling in the real police.

The "HEALTH SERVICE" offers treatment by fringe medicine for a range of ailments. Unorthodox treatments include herbal potions, acupuncture and yoga exercises.

There are also LAWYERS to advise on squatters' problems, like how to frustrate court eviction orders, how to squeeze more money out of social security, how to defeat property owners.

All movements need leaders. Squatters have plenty. Some are men pursuing frankly political aims—like bearded Piers Corbyn, 25.

"I'm an International Marxist," he claims, clenching his fist symbolically. "Squatting is people organising themselves together."

"People must get organised to change society. It is all a useful preparation for the revolution."

Corbyn is a graduate and former physics teacher. His conversation sounds like a series of slogans.

In his eyes the homeless are a helpless, hapless mass to be used in the political struggle.

THEY want to CHANGE society. "This is the beginning of the revolution," boast the men who claim to have 30,000 squatters in London alone.

That's the equivalent of a town the size of Canterbury or Manchester living without paying a penny in rent.

That's a dirty word in squatterland.

"They've got a jingle that's become their 'national anthem.' It goes like this:

"You wonder where your money went,
If you waste your money squapping rent.
In many cases they don't pay a penny in rates either. So the rest of us foot the bill."

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR HOME IS TAKEN OVER

IF SQUATTERS arrive at your house, don't let them across the doorstep, even for a cuppa. And NEVER accept rent. Otherwise you may be stuck with them.

Any "agreements" shown by the squatter may make the squatter a "licensee" in law. If squatters are already in it's no good calling the police. Squatters are "trespassers" and a civil, not criminal matter.

Call if they use your electricity or coal, steal your property or cause damage. You may also call the police. You may have them arrested for squatting. DON'T TRY to resist

squatters by force. Then YOU may be in trouble with the police for causing a breach of the peace.

It's best to employ a good solicitor to apply for a court order for eviction.

A big problem may be establishing the identity of your squatters, and serving court papers on them in their correct names.

Squatters have been known to try to evade eviction and thwart the service of court papers by

giving false names. But now this loophole is being closed to them.

If you win the court case, the next stage is a warrant for possession. Then you can employ the court bailiffs, who are entitled to use "reasonable force" to evict your squatters and force to enter your squatters' papers on them in their correct names.

Watch out for a final trick by the squatters... leaving peacefully as bailiffs approach, but moving back a few days later. Then you're back where you started, too.

NEW SQUATTER

He claims to have helped about a thousand people to squat during the last two years. He is the unchallenged leader of the 800 Maida Hill squatters in London.

To many of them he is the local council, the mayor, town clerk, magistrate, police chief, and editor of the local paper, all in one.

A veteran of the Red Lion Square riot, he is a full-time social organiser, working from an office in Eglon Avenue—rent-free, of course, like his home there.

He refuses to pay rent, because rent is part of the system he hopes to destroy.

HOWEVER there is another part of the system that finds favour with him—social security benefit for the unemployed.

The much-employed Mr. Corbyn told us that he lives on it. Matthew Crichton, has a degree in social science and, like Piers Corbyn, an income from social security.

The 22-year-old Cambridge graduate came to London last October in search of a job in social research. He ended up as leader of the Eglon, London, squatters with only the dode to show for his honours degree.

He lives among 200 squatters who took over three blocks of council flats in Hadeville Road.

Crichton is a good talker. With some colleagues he met the council housing officials and actually talked them into letting his squatters have a supply of electricity.

This, in spite of the fact that there are people on the council's lists waiting to move into houses.

Less political but no less dedicated a squatter leader is 27-year-old, former hospital porter, Mr. Leszek Dunowski — Teki, for short.

He runs an "Advisory Service for Squatters" in Islington, keeping lists of empty houses for would-be squatters.

But Teki is persuasive rather than militant in his approach. He actively works alongside Social Workers from the town hall and Salvation Army.

As well as university graduates there are other unlikely "posh" people to be found on the squatting scene.

Posh and glamorous, too—like Caroline Lewin, 22, a university graduate now on an architectural course, and squatting at Tolmers Square in Euston.

She says she receives a £200-a-year grant, but she says she can't afford rent, so she squats. "Of course my parents were horrified," she said in her cultured voice.

Eighteen-year-old brunettes

ARMY



THERE'S not much glamour about squatting, but these three young ladies add a touch of class to the scene.

Liz Thornton (right), squatting in West London, claims to come from a family of "property owners."

Cultured-voiced Sue Rowley and Jenny Jones (far picture) on the balcony of their posh squat in the middle of genteel Cheltenham.



'Change locks, put in furniture'

Liz Thornton also comes from a "respectable" background. Her family, she says, are large property owners.

She would not tolerate the idea of anyone squatting in her parents' property, but she sees nothing wrong in installing herself rent-free in somebody's flat in Eglon Avenue West London.

We also met the Cheltenham ladies squatters, the glamorous, polished Sue Rowley, 21, and Jenny Jones, 18, who have occupied a comfortable flat in an exclusive part of this genteel town.

"We used to be paying £20 a week for our accommodation," said Sue, who lives on social security. "But this place is beautiful and free. Why bother to pay rent, when you can squat for nothing?"

And so say all the squatters.

Britain's squatters have their own do-it-yourself manual — full of useful advice on how to break in to empty houses, change locks, connect the electricity and barricade against the bailiffs.

The 30-page "Squatters Handbook" (price 10s) explains the opening moves of an intending squatter — "consult the redevelopment plans" at a local council office. This will give the whereabouts of properties empty

squatting development. The front-door lock is the first thing to be changed when the squatter finds his perfect squat.

"It is perfectly legal so long as you do no damage to the door or old lock," says the handbook.

The smart squatter makes sure he installs some furniture quickly. "It helps show the police and neighbours that you are not burglars", and then puts a legal notice on the door stating that the house is occupied by squatters who intend to stay.

Another important section of the "Squatters Handbook" tells squatters how to get social security money.

If social security officials refuse to pay because the "squat" is not a permanent address, the trick (according to the handbook) is to "send a letter to yourself."

When the letter is delivered, produce it to the social security as proof of your address.

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NEXT WEEK: The shocking diary of a People girl who became a squatter

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Sunday People